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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Three plead guilty in human smuggling case

(Phoenix, Ariz. – April 23, 2004) Attorney General Terry Goddard announced the plea agreement reached with three men accused of smuggling a person across the border and then holding him hostage while seeking payment from the victim's cousin.

Malvin Omar Chirnos-Cruz (aka Victorico Sanchez-Barrios), Dennis Ivan Casere-Escobar and Marvin Omar Galeano-Acosta were each charged with Illegally Conducting an Enterprise, Kidnapping and Threatening and Intimidating. The defendants held the victim hostage, and threatened to harm him. They relayed their threats to the victim's cousin. The investigation and arrests were the efforts of officers assigned to the U.S. Customs Task Force.

Defendants Casere-Escobar and Chirnos-Cruz face up to 3.5 years in prison and Galeano-Acosta faces up to 2 years in prison. The defendants are scheduled to be sentenced on May 11 and 25, 2004. Assistant Attorney General Laura Reckart prosecuted this case.

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